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P.O. Box 13006, Roanoke, VA 24030-3006

This newsletter is also available on our website: www.ptnews.org

E-mail address for general communication: mike@ptnews.org

E-mail address for orders: Joycew5656@aol.com

The End of the Church Age

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery ... that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” [Romans 11:25](#)

By Mike Wingfield

According to the Scriptures, the church, the body of Christ, suddenly began at the Jewish feast of Pentecost, as recorded in [Acts 2](#). Likewise, the end of the Church Age will take place at a sudden event in one day, the Rapture, recorded in [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#).

From the larger context of God's eternal plan, His sovereign choice to work through the Jewish people took a sudden detour about 2,000 years ago when the church was birthed at Pentecost. Prior to the beginning of the church, God had exclusively worked through an ethnic group who trace its genetic roots back to the 12 sons of Jacob. This ethnic group is Israel, the Jewish people.

For more than 2,000 years, from the time of Abraham until Pentecost in [Acts 2](#), God had exclusively communicated His revelation and salvation through His chosen people ([Romans 9:4-5](#)). Even when the Father sent His Son, Jesus, as the Messiah and the incarnate Son of God, He exclusively ministered to His Jewish brethren. Matthew, in his gospel wrote, ***“And Jesus went about all***

the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom” ([Matthew 9:35](#)). When Jesus sent out His 12 apostles to preach, He gave them the following instructions, ***“Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans [an ethnic group that was a mixture of Jewish and Gentile genetic roots] enter ye not; But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand”*** ([Matthew 10:5-7](#)).

In the early days of the church, the body of Christ was totally Jewish. Those who were saved on the day the church was born were all Jews ([Acts 2:5](#)). They had come to Jerusalem from other nations to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. It was not until [Acts 10](#) that the first Gentile was saved and made a part of the spiritual body of Christ. This was a very difficult matter for the Jewish people to grasp. For at least two millennia, God had exclusively worked through a Jewish remnant to bring salvation to the

Jewish nation of Israel. After the sacrificial death of Jesus, the divine opening of God's door of salvation to the Gentiles was a great mystery to the Jewish people.

The Apostle Paul, being directed by the Holy Spirit, has given us insight into this great mystery in [Ephesians 2:11-3:12](#). It is extremely important that we Gentile believers grasp the truth of the mystery he wrote about in this text. In this letter to the Gentile believers in Ephesus, he explains the spiritual dilemma of the Gentiles prior to the suffering of Messiah on the cross. He explains, *“Wherefore, remember, that being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, ... ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now, in [Messiah] Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of [Messiah] (Ephesians 2:11-13).*

Later, in a letter to the church at Rome, Paul would use another analogy to explain this great mystery. In [Romans 11](#), he explained that God's work of salvation was like the life that flows from God to the Jewish nation, which in this analogy is compared to a natural olive tree ([Romans 11:15-24](#)). He explains that due to the Jews' rejection of God's Son, God broke off some of the dead branches of the natural olive tree. At the same time, God would graft in branches from a wild olive tree. These branches of the wild olive tree would represent the Gentile converts in the new body of Messiah – the church.

According to the Bible, when we reach out to people with the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are shining the light of the glorious gospel into the spiritual darkness of their heart.

In the context of [Romans 11](#), the Apostle Paul gives the Gentile church a very significant message. He has warned us to not be *“wise in your own conceits” (Romans 11:25)*. Using the analogy of a living natural olive tree, Paul explains that the grafting in of the Gentile branches onto the Jewish trunk and roots of the natural olive tree is only a **temporary** arrangement. The time will come when Jesus will break the Gentile branches off of the tree and graft the Jewish branches back into the natural olive tree. In this analogy, the branches of a predominately Gentile

church will continue to exist in God's eternal plan *“until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11:25)*. When this happens, God must supernaturally remove the Gentile branches with the Rapture. After the Rapture, God's plan will once again be renewed [grafted in once again] with the salvation of the entire nation of Israel ([Romans 11:26](#)). During the Tribulation, God's plan to reach the world with the gospel will not be through the church, but through a redeemed Jewish remnant. Once again, redemption will flow out to the Gentile nations from Jerusalem ([Joel 2:32](#)).

According to the prophetic Scriptures, the end of the Church Age will be marked by two prevailing conditions. The communication of these conditions is illustrated with another biblical analogy. The Bible depicts the saving work of God as a spiritual light shining into the spiritual darkness of the world. This analogy is repeated throughout the Word of God. In the Scriptures, the character of God is visualized as being like a great light. *“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5)*. Jesus is portrayed in the Bible as the great spiritual light that came into the world ([John 1:4-5; 8:12](#)). Likewise, the Bible is portrayed as being light. [Psalm 119:105](#) says, *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*

According to the Bible, when we reach out to people with the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are shining the light of the glorious gospel into the spiritual darkness of their heart. The Spirit of God works in their mind to illumine their true spiritual need of Jesus for salvation ([2 Corinthians 4:6](#)). When they respond with faith unto salvation, they are called out of their spiritual darkness to walk in the light of God's Word ([John 8:12](#)).

When the Lord gave the Apostle Paul his commission to reach out to the Gentile world with the gospel, He told Paul that the gospel would **“open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18)**.

With this understanding, let us examine two conditions that will mark the end of the church age:

Condition #1- The Reception of the Light of God's Revelation

When the Lord sent out His apostles with the message of the gospel, He gave them specific marching orders as to how they were to proceed with their global mission. The book of Acts clearly delineates this commission and how it was carried out by the apostles and those who followed them.

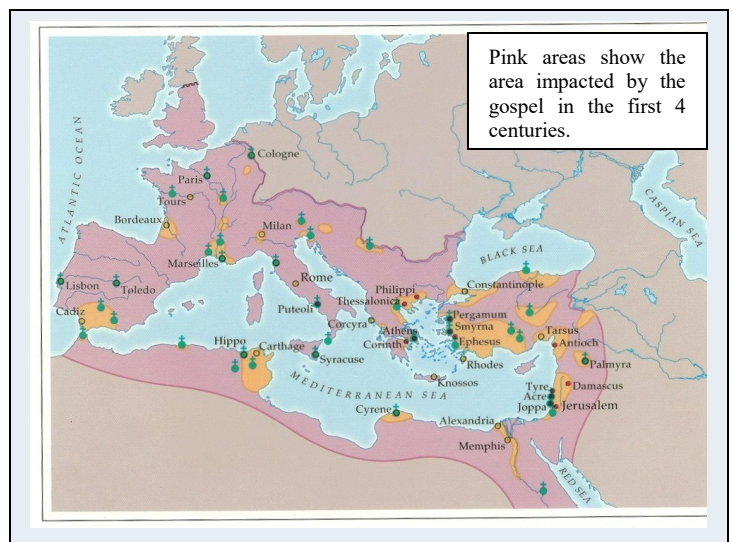
My understanding of what I will share with you in this newsletter began in 1973 when I was a student at Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana. In a class on church history, my instructor, Ivan French, shared a unique observation he had made in his many years of studying church history in the book of Acts and in the records that followed up until modern times. I owe him a debt of gratitude for opening my eyes to this incredible observation about the pattern of the Holy Spirit's work of shining the light of the gospel around the world.

After His resurrection, Jesus made many appearances over the next 40 days. When it was time for Him to ascend back to His Father in heaven, He gave His disciples the Great Commission to take the gospel around the world. He said to them, ***“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”*** ([Acts 1:8](#)). The preaching of the gospel was to begin in Jerusalem after the Holy Spirit came upon them on the day of Pentecost in [Acts 2](#). From here, the apostles were to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as they went out from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and then into the Gentile world.

The book of Acts records for us the missionary activity of the apostles as they were directed by the Holy Spirit. Ivan French observed that according to the book of Acts and the remaining 19 centuries, the Holy Spirit sent His messengers mainly to the west of Israel to begin the global assignment of taking the gospel to the Gentile world. From the church in Antioch, Paul and his associates went to Asia Minor, which is today called Turkey. [Acts 13-16](#) records Paul's evangelistic efforts in this area. [Acts 17-19](#) gives us details about Paul's work to the west as he took the gospel to Greece. Eventually, before his death, Paul

would take the gospel further to the west in Europe, in Rome ([Acts 28](#)).

Ivan French explained that ancient records of church history demonstrate how the Spirit of God continued to move the light of the gospel further to the west in Europe. Then, he explained how the Spirit reached around the world with the light of the gospel. It was like the pattern of the sun moving across the face of the earth from east to west. He said that just as the sun moves across the face of the earth, behind it later that day comes the shadow of darkness and night. Even so, church history demonstrates that as the light of the gospel continued to move west, Israel, Turkey, and Greece began to experience apostasy in the church. Once again, spiritual darkness returned to those regions.



Ivan French explained that as the spiritual darkness settled upon Europe there were believers who wanted to escape and come to a new land to establish a new spiritual frontier on which to grow the church. Many of those who made the voyage across the Atlantic paid a great price to come to America. History demonstrates how America was founded by men of deep spiritual convictions. Here in America, the Word of God grew mightily. After being firmly established, the American church would send out missionaries to the world.

However, as Ivan French explained in 1973, the spiritual darkness was moving across the face of America. He explained that the work of the Spirit in the 1970s was moving with the greatest reception in Communist China and other parts of the Far East. Then he paused to draw this conclusion. When the end comes, according to the

prophetic Scriptures, the Holy Spirit will once again, after circling the globe, return to Jerusalem where He began this incredible mission. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish people will come to salvation in Jesus Christ as the Tribulation Period begins ([Joel 2:28-32](#); [Revelation 7](#)). Once again, salvation will go forth from Jerusalem. The ancient prophet of Israel, Joel, writing about the time of the Tribulation declared, *“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call”* ([Joel 2:32](#)).

As Ivan French neared the end of his comments on this subject, he reminded us that at some point, possibly in our lifetime, we would see the powerful moving of the Holy Spirit in Muslim countries in the area of the Persian Gulf, just to the east of Israel. He stated that when that occurred it would signal that the light of the gospel had circled the entire globe and was about to return to Israel. Then, the Jewish people would be saved at the opening of the Tribulation Period.

As my mind went back to that lecture 48 years ago, I wondered if there was any Scriptural evidence that would support Ivan French’s observation. My search led me to [Malachi 1:11](#), *“For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles.”* See also [Psalm 50:1-2](#) and [Psalm 113:2-3](#). The Scriptures and the historical pattern of church history seem to support the observation that God’s Spirit has been following a divine pattern of literally circling the globe from east to west to effectively bring the light of the gospel to the Gentile nations.

Today, the greatest reception of the gospel is in the Persian Gulf area to the east of Israel. We are being told by missionaries in these areas that tens of thousands of Muslims are coming to Christ and are born again. My friends, this is amazing! I remember in my seminary days that a missionary to the Muslims came to speak at our chapel and told how difficult his ministry had been. After 40 years of sharing the gospel with Muslims in that region, he had only one known convert! Look what is happening now. This is unprecedented!

I must remind you that this new spiritual awakening in Muslim countries is not due to some new effort on the part of Christian missionaries. It is the evidence of the powerful moving of the Holy Spirit in those countries that have for centuries been enveloped in great spiritual darkness. According to the Scriptures, salvation is the work of God. *“No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit”* ([1 Corinthians 12:3](#)). What is happening in the Muslim countries east of Israel is the unique, supernatural work of God fulfilling His eternal purposes.



According to current records, 11 of the top 20 countries in the world where the gospel is most effectively being received are in Muslim countries. These countries include Iran, Afghanistan, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, and Yemen. Friends, this is stunningly amazing! It is a powerful sign that before the Muslim antichrist appears with his powerful deception, God in His mercy is reaching out to Muslims who are caught in this trap of spiritual deception that has gripped that part of the world for 14 centuries. He knows those who are open to the gospel, and He is making sure that they will hear the gospel and be saved before this time of great spiritual deception arrives. Our great God is the God of true deliverance and salvation. He is *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* ([2 Peter 3:9](#)). What a God we serve! Why not take time now to bow your head and thank Him for saving you?

We are being told that the Holy Spirit is moving in Iran with great power and tens of thousands of Iranian Muslims are coming to Christ. The Christian Broadcast

Network has reported that “Christianity is growing faster in the Islamic Republic of Iran than in any other country.” Another documentary states that the new Iranian converts are “bowing their knees to the Jewish Messiah – with kindled affection toward the Jewish people.” It is reported that there are now more than 1 million Christians in Iran. How is this happening now? What is taking place in these Muslim countries to cause hundreds of thousands of Muslims to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ? They know that becoming a Christian in the heart of Islamic territory could cost them their lives. Thousands of these born-again believers have already given their lives for their new-found Savior – Jesus Christ. In many cases, their own family has killed them as commanded by their Islamic authorities.

Many in Iran and other Muslim countries are hearing the gospel beamed into their countries by satellite radio. Muslims are trapped in a cruel religious system and are looking for hope. They are finding freedom and hope in Jesus Christ. Jesus has declared, **“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36)**. Furthermore, in thousands of cases, we are being told by conservative evangelical missionaries that many of these new Muslim converts are reporting that a man wearing a long flowing robe and identifying Himself as Jesus has come to them in a dream or vision during the night. He gives them instructions to look for someone who has a message from Him. Eventually, those who received these visions were able to speak with a believer. They were given the gospel. Each one, without exception, gave their life to Christ. Obviously, this is the work of the Holy Spirit!

The testimony of the Scriptures is that faith produced due to the demand to see some touchable evidence is a lesser faith than the faith that comes as a result of just hearing God and believing Him without any external proofs.

As I personally examined all of this, the Spirit of the Lord directed me to [Joel 2:28-29](#). In this text, during the beginning of the Tribulation Period, the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon the sons of Israel to bring them to

salvation. Joel wrote, **“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit” (Joel 2:28-29)**.

This text has been incorrectly interpreted and applied by many of our precious, charismatic brethren. First, this passage has no application to the charismatic signs and wonders movement that has been so prevalent in the last 100 years. The Apostle Peter correctly noted that what happened on the day of Pentecost was a partial fulfillment of this prophetic utterance of Joel. Those who spoke in tongues and exhibited supernatural signs at Pentecost were all Jews ([Acts 2:5](#)). According to Joel, the Lord’s promise in this text was for the Jewish people. Study the context of [Joel 2](#). Immediately before [verse 28](#), in [verse 27](#) God said, **“And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.”**

This is a very significant observation when considering our understanding of the supernatural sign gifts of the Holy Spirit. They were given to the Jewish people and for the Jewish people to produce believing faith. The Bible says, **“Wherefore, tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not” (1 Corinthians 14:22)**. Paul, himself being a Jew, declared, **“the Jews require a sign” (1 Corinthians 1:22)**. In other words, the Jews needed some supernatural tangible evidence in order to believe what God had said. That is why the first person in the Bible to be endowed with supernatural signs was Moses in the book of Exodus. Other leaders of Israel who were given supernatural sign gifts were Elijah and Elisha, who were ministering as prophets of God to Israel at a time of great spiritual apostasy. God did not give these men supernatural gifts to elevate them to some type of special spiritual status. These signs were given to them to authenticate their mission and their message as being from God ([Exodus 3:1- 4:5](#)).

Later, the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth and said, **“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (2 Corinthians 12:11)**. The authentication of

these miracles during Paul's ministry did not elevate him to some super spiritual position. In the previous verse he said, ***"I am become a fool in glorying ... I be nothing"*** ([2 Corinthians 12:11](#)).

The testimony of the Scriptures is that faith produced due to the demand to see some touchable evidence is a lesser faith than the faith that comes as a result of just hearing God and believing Him without any external proofs. Look at the example of Thomas after the resurrection in [John 20:24-29](#). Thomas refused to believe until he saw the scars in the hands and feet of His Savior. This was the typical response of the entire Jewish nation from the time of Moses. After Jesus appeared to Thomas and he saw his resurrected Lord, Jesus said to him, ***"Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed"*** ([John 20:29](#)).

The Scriptures and church history demonstrate that as the church became less Jewish and the Jewish apostles began to pass off the scene in the first century, the sign gifts also began to disappear. This is exactly what the Scriptures indicate would happen. In [1 Corinthians 13:8](#), Paul reminded the church at Corinth, a predominately Gentile congregation, that tongues would ***"cease."*** The Greek word for cease does not mean that the sign gifts would be permanently retired by God. It means they would be temporarily placed on a shelf until the end times when the Lord would once again renew His work of salvation among the Jewish people. Therefore, when the end would come, sign gifts would be renewed by God to reach His Jewish people, because ***"the Jews require a sign"*** ([1 Corinthians 1:22](#)).

These sign gifts would primarily come through the two Jewish witnesses [probably Moses and Elijah] during the first half of the Tribulation ([Revelation 11:3-6](#)). They would also accompany many other Jewish believers during the Tribulation ([Joel 2:28-32](#)).

During the days of the early church, these supernatural gifts were also given to Gentile believers. Good examples of this were the first Gentile converts in the house of Cornelius ([Acts 10:44-48](#)) and the Gentile believers in the church at Corinth ([1 Corinthians 12, 14](#)). According to the overall testimony of the Scriptures, it is apparent that the Lord endued these Gentile believers with these supernatural sign gifts because of their Jewish audience.

It was to bring Jews to salvation. Paul wrote to the Gentile church in Rome and reminded them that ***"salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them [the Jews] to jealousy"*** ([Romans 11:11](#)).

The church did begin in one day at the feast of Pentecost in [Acts 2](#). However, it took several years for the Jewish people to transition into a new mindset to recognize what had happened. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, this was a great mystery for the Jewish believers. Therefore, I am convinced that much of the book of Acts represents a unique transition period in the work of God. During this time, He schooled the Jewish mindset to understand that the Gentiles would play the major role in the new work of God called the church. That is why this transition period was filled with unique signs and wonders. Once God's revelation clarified what He was doing, the sign gifts began to dissipate. The Scriptures and the records of church history confirm this.

As previously mentioned in this article, the Apostle Paul wrote in [Romans 11:25-26](#), ***"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."*** It is my opinion that we are once again in another transition period as the Church Age comes to an end. God is transitioning back to His original plan of bringing salvation to His Jewish people. Therefore, the visions and dreams of Jesus among the Gentiles in the Muslim countries is a powerful sign that we are approaching the end of the Gentile church age.

Could it be that the dreams and visions mentioned by Joel will also be of the same nature within the Jewish nation at the beginning of the Church Age? Jesus personally appeared to a Jewish rebel named Saul on the road to Damascus and brought him to salvation ([Acts 9:1-22](#)). Will He once again appear in dreams and visions to the Jews people during the Tribulation to bring them to salvation? I cannot be dogmatic about this. However, it does seem to have some validity as we exam the Scriptures and see what the Lord has previously done. All of this seems to powerfully point to the end of the Church Age, which will happen on a specific day – the day of the Rapture.

Condition #2- The Resistance of the Light of God's Revelation

There is another condition that marks the end of the Church Age. According to the Scriptures, the light of the gospel will be rejected both by the world and by the professing church at the end of this age.

First, the light of the gospel will be resisted from outside the church. Jesus said, ***"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"*** ([Matthew 16:18](#)). The church of Jesus Christ, from the very beginning, has been met with resistance from the godless culture of the world. The book of Acts recorded this resistance, and it has continued until this very day. The believers in Jesus have suffered persecution and martyrdom as Satan attacks the Lord's true church.

When the end of this age comes, the Scriptures testify that believers in Jesus Christ will continue to suffer great persecution and martyrdom. While speaking to His Jewish disciples about the signs of His coming and the end of the age, Jesus said, ***"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake"*** ([Matthew 24:9](#)). Those who follow and record what has happened in the last 100 years tell us that more believers in Jesus have been martyred in the last century than in the previous 19 centuries combined! Wherever Communist or Islamic governments rule over men, believers in Jesus have been brutally tortured and killed. As the restraining influences over Islam and Communism are being removed, evil is beginning to escalate out of control. This has been

recently illustrated in Afghanistan. While U.S. troops were keeping some relative form of peace in parts of that Muslim country, new believers in Jesus felt somewhat safe. However, now that we have withdrawn from Afghanistan, Christians are being tortured and killed. As the U.S. ceases to restrain evil in the world, it creates the perfect environment for global persecution and killing of believers.

Iran's new president, Ebrahim Raisi, was the former Attorney General in Iran during the 1980s. He was known as "the butcher," killing thousands who opposed the new Islamic Republic of Iran and its radical agenda. It is believed he is preparing for a brutal attack against the Christian population in Iran. According to the prophetic Word of God, Satan is preparing to kill millions of Christians around the world. This is the trend that will only intensify after the Rapture of the church.

Secondly, the light of the gospel will be resisted from inside the professing church of the last days. According to the prophetic Word of God, the end of this age will also be characterized as a time of dangerous spiritual deception, apostasy, and apathy in the church ([Luke 18:8](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:3](#); [1 Timothy 4:1](#)). It is shocking to discover that many who call themselves Christians in America are openly rejecting the Word of God!

Therefore, the reception and resistance of the light of the gospel in our world today tells us that we are very near the end of the Church Age! His coming must be at hand.

Be ready for the shout that will take us out!

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Mike is now available to conduct on-site conferences.

For any changes or updates, check out our website- www.ptnews.org.

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November 4, Rocky Mount, VA	Monthly Bible Study at Franklin Heights Church	1-540-798-5110
November 18, Roanoke, VA	Monthly Bible Study at Clearbrook Baptist Church	1-540-798-5110
December 2, Rocky Mount, VA	Monthly Bible Study at Franklin Heights Church	1-540-798-5110
December 16, Roanoke, VA	Monthly Bible Study at Clearbrook Baptist Church	1-540-798-5110

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